



Paper No. 26

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APR 28 2003

**OFFICE OF PETITIONS
ON PETITION**

In re Application of
Lee, et al.
Application No. 09/219,195
Filed: December 21, 1998
Attorney Docket No. SA997115
For: INTERCONNECT MODULE FOR USE IN
A SUSPENSION ASSEMBLY

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed February 14, 2003 (certificate of mailing date February 7, 2003), to revive the above-identified application.

The petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) is **DISMISSED**.

Any further petition to revive the above-identified application must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Petition under 37 CFR 1.137." This is **not** final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to properly reply to the final Office action of May 22, 2002. Petitioners filed an amendment after final on August 7, 2002 (certificate of mailing date July 22, 2002) that failed to place the above-identified application in *prima facie* condition for allowance. On August 28, 2002, an Advisory action was mailed to a former address of record. On December 17, 2002, a Notice of Abandonment was mailed to the same former address of record.

A grantable petition to revive an abandoned application under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by (1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof; (2) the petition fee as set forth in § 1.17(l); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in § 1.20 (d)) required pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section. This petition does not satisfy requirement (3).

Regarding (3), the showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(a). Specifically, an application is "unavoidably" abandoned only where petitioner, or counsel for petitioner, takes all action necessary for a proper response to the outstanding Office action, but through the intervention of unforeseen circumstances, such as failure of mail, telegraph, telefacsimile, or the negligence of otherwise reliable employees, the response is not timely received in the Office. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r Pat. 1887).

The Commissioner may revive an abandoned application if the delay in responding to the relevant outstanding Office requirement is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable". 35 USC § 133. Decisions on reviving abandoned applications have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (Comm'r Pat. 1887)(the term 'unavoidable' "is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business"); In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (D.C. Cir. 1912); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (Comm'r Pat. 1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition to revive an application as unavoidably abandoned cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing the cause of the unavoidable delay. Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 5 USPQ2d 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

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In the instant case, petitioners have failed to provide adequate evidence that the delay was unavoidable. Petitioners assert that the entire delay was caused by the PTO directing the Advisory Action to an incorrect address.

Petitioners are reminded that after a final action, there are only five possible replies: (1) a Notice of Appeal, (2) the filing of a continuing application, (3) a 37 CFR 1.129(a) submission, if appropriate, (4) an amendment after final that makes the case ready for issuance or (4) an RCE. To be a proper reply, an amendment after final must eliminate all of the Examiner's objections and rejections, and thus place the case in *prima facie* condition for allowance.

Petitioners' Amendment After Final failed to eliminate all of the Examiner's objections and rejections, as was stated in the Advisory Opinion of August 28, 2002.

An Advisory Opinion does not restart the prosecution of the application. The post-final rejection of amendments does not obligate the Office or examiner to provide an applicant with a new time period or time limit in which to provide a complete response under 37 CFR 1.113.

The rules of practice are clear that prosecution of an application to save it from abandonment must include such complete and proper action as the condition of the case may require. The admission of an amendment not responsive to the last Office action, or refusal to admit the same, shall not operate to save the application from abandonment. "[T]he admission of, or refusal to admit, any amendment after final rejection, and any proceedings relative thereto, shall not operate to relieve the application or patent under reexamination from its condition as subject to appeal or to save the application from abandonment under § 1.135." See 37 CFR 1.116(a).

It is undisputed that the Office mailed the Advisory Action and the final Office action to the former address of record. However, petitioners responded to the final Office action in a timely manner. Unfortunately the reply was not proper. Petitioners are reminded that an Advisory Action is mailed as a courtesy and does not start a new period for response. The application became abandoned because petitioners did not submit a proper reply to the final Office action. The fact that the Advisory Action was not received does not absolve petitioners from filing a complete reply to the final Office action.

A registered practitioner is expected to appreciate that proceedings under 37 CFR 1.116 in an application subject to a final Office action will not operate to avoid abandonment in the absence of a timely and proper appeal. See 37 CFR 1.116 and 1.135. Petitioners' failure to appreciate that the filing of a proposed amendment under 37 CFR 1.116 on August 7, 2002 (certificate of mailing date July 22, 2002) did not relieve petitioners of the burden of timely filing a notice of appeal to avoid abandonment of the above-identified application. The abandonment of an application subject to a final Office action is not "unavoidable" within the meaning of 35 USC 133 and 37 CFR 1.137(a) in the situation in which the applicant simply permits the maximum extendable statutory period for reply to a final Office action to expire while awaiting a notice of allowance or other action. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. At 53162, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 89 (response to comment 66).

The petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) is dismissed.

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

Petitioners should consider filing a petition stating that the delay was unintentional. Public Law 97-247, § 3, 96 Stat. 317 (1982), which revised patent and trademark fees, amended 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) to provide for the revival of an "unintentionally" abandoned application without a showing that the delay in prosecution or in late payment of an issue fee was "unavoidable." This amendment to 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) has been implemented in 37 CFR 1.137(b). An "unintentional" petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the \$ 1300.00 petition fee.

The filing of a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) cannot be intentionally delayed and therefore must be filed promptly. A person seeking revival due to unintentional delay can not make a statement that the delay was unintentional unless the entire delay, including the delay from the date it was discovered that the application was abandoned until the filing of the petition to revive under 37 CFR 1.137(b), was unintentional. A statement that the delay was unintentional is not appropriate if petitioner intentionally delayed the filing of a petition for revival under 37 CFR 1.137(b). For petitioners' convenience, a blank copy of PTO/SB/64 -- Petition for Revival of an Application for Patent Abandoned Unintentionally under 37 CFR 1.137(b) is enclosed.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:


By mail until 05/01/03: Commissioner for Patents
Box DAC
Washington, D.C. 20231

By mail on or after 05/01/03: Mail Stop PETITION
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By facsimile: (703) 308-6916
Attn: Office of Petitions

By hand: Office of Petitions
2201 South Clark Place
Crystal Plaza 4, Suite 3C23
Arlington, VA 22202

Telephone inquiries pertaining to this matter may be directed to the undersigned at (703) 308-6712.


E. Shirene Willis
Senior Petitions Attorney
Office of Petitions

enclosures: blank PTO/SB/64 -- Petition for Revival of an Application Abandoned
Unintentionally under 37 CFR 1.137(b)

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